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New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support

Letter dated 24 January 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the summary of discussion of the Japan-African Regional Economic Communities Summit Round Table, held on 26 September 2013, in the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly and chaired by the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe (see annex).

As part of the follow-up to the Fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, the round table provided a rare opportunity for the regional economic communities and Japan to exchange views on the efforts and visions of the regional economic communities for promoting agricultural development in Africa.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Motohide **Yoshikawa**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

14-22031 (E) 040214

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Annex to the letter dated 24 January 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English/French]

Summary of discussion of the Japan-African Regional Economic Communities Summit Round Table, New York, 25 September 2013

As part of the follow-up to the Fifth Tokyo Conference on International Development, the Japan-African Regional Economic Communities Summit Round Table was held in New York in the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly, on 26 September 2013. Chaired by the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, the round table provided a rare opportunity for the regional economic communities and Japan to exchange views on the efforts and visions of the regional economic communities for promoting agricultural development in Africa. The summary of discussion is as follows:

1. Participants

Japan: Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan (Chair)

Akihiko Tanaka, President, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

Africa: Chairs of the regional economic communities

Economic Community of West African States: Alassane Dramane Ouattara, President of Côte d'Ivoire

Southern African Development Community: Joyce Banda, President of Malawi

Arab Maghreb Union: Ali Zaidan Mohammed Zaidant, Prime Minister of Libya

Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and East African Community: Sam K. Kutesa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda

Intergovernmental Authority on Development: Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia

Economic Community of Central African States and Community of Sahelo-Saharan States: Moussa Faki Mahamat, Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration of Chad

New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): Mankeur Ndiaye, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad of Senegal

Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, Chief Executive Officer, NEPAD

Agnes Soucat, Director for Human Development, African Development Bank

Co-organizers of the Fifth Tokyo Conference on International Development (United Nations, United Nations Development Programme, World Bank, African Union Commission) and respective secretariats of the regional economic communities

2. Summary

(a) Remarks by Prime Minister Abe

Highlighting the efforts of the regional economic communities to promote agricultural development, Prime Minister Abe reiterated his commitment to supporting Africa's development efforts at "empowering farmers as mainstream economic actors" as agreed at the Fifth Tokyo Conference on International Development. Citing the examples of Japanese women who launched agribusinesses in Africa with high levels of added value and also the Japanese approach to agricultural assistance, including the development of New Rice for Africa, he reiterated the need to aim at agriculture that enables the farmer to earn money, not just to eat. He also stressed that having farmers become affluent leads to the creation of a large consumer market that will support economic growth.

(b) Remarks by Mr. Mayaki

Underlining the critical role of regional economic communities in achieving the targets set within the framework of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), Mr. Mayaki noted three priority areas within the context of the round Table. The first priority is accelerating infrastructure and capacity development so as to increase agricultural productivity and value-addition. The second priority is "empowering farmers as mainstream economic actors" by focusing on their impact on agriculture, food and nutrition security. Touching upon the efforts of NEPAD in implementing CAADP, Mr. Mayaki stressed the need to prioritize (a) the transformation of smallholder farmers into commercial farmers; and (b) support for strengthening and expanding small and medium entrepreneurship along the entire agriculture value chain. The third priority is promoting the sustainable use of natural resources that supports farmers and rural communities in scaling up climate-smart agriculture.

(c) Remarks by Mr. Tanaka

Mr. Tanaka highlighted the JICA strategy of "three arrows" for supporting agricultural development in Africa. The first arrow is the Smallholder Horticulture Empowerment and Promotion initiative, which aims at facilitating the transition from agriculture that enables farmers to eat to agriculture that enables them to earn money. The second arrow is the Coalition for African Rice Development, which aims to double the annual rice production in sub-Saharan Africa. He highlighted the progress of the Coalition since its launch at the Fourth Tokyo Conference on International Development, in 2008. The third arrow is the promotion of agricultural investment in Africa. Reiterating that the African Union, NEPAD and the regional economic communities would play an essential role in carrying out CAADP and the Maputo Declaration, he reaffirmed the commitment of JICA to supporting agriculture development in Africa.

(d) General discussion

- Many participants remarked on the importance of agriculture in Africa as an engine of growth and also as a catalyst for promoting poverty reduction. Agricultural development is one of the priority areas not only for individual African countries but also for the regional economic communities and the African continent as a whole.

- The clear view was expressed that development cooperation region-wide is critical to promoting agricultural development in Africa, and participants emphasized the role of the regional economic communities in that regard. Participants expressed their high expectations that Japan would support the efforts of the regional economic communities in promoting agricultural development in areas such as agriculture technology and capacity-building.

- Participants presented the visions and strategies of the regional economic communities in respect of expanding and growing the agricultural sector for economic transformation in their regions. These include developing regional agricultural policy, promoting interregional agricultural trade and developing an efficient regional market and value chain for agricultural products. Progress in the implementation of CAADP over the past decade was also highlighted.

- While Africa has great agricultural potential, a number of key challenges to fulfilling that potential remain to be addressed, including improving productivity, developing infrastructure, improving access to finance and technology, building capacity and increasing agricultural investment, among others. It was also mentioned that regional economic communities have a primary mission of abolishing non-tariff barriers in the agricultural sector so as to expand agromarkets and thus promote intraregional trade.

- Many participants emphasized that, from the standpoint of human security, it is essential and urgent to increase food production and productivity to ensure regional food security and nutrition. The need to make African agriculture more climate-resilient, particularly in drylands was also highlighted.

- There was also an acknowledgement of the special need to strengthen the role of female and smallholder farmers as key players in agriculture, given that they produce the majority of food in African countries, by ensuring equal access and opportunity.